

Conference on Disarmament

13 March 2012

English

Final record of the one thousand two hundred and fifty-third plenary meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 13 March 2012, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Hisham Badr(Egypt)

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The President: I declare open the 1253rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you recall, in my first statement to the Conference on Disarmament on 21 February, I said that I was cautiously optimistic that we can reach a compromise on the programme of work. I said the task was not easy, but that I came with the spirit of challenging the status quo even if it meant getting some people out of their comfort zone. I took very seriously the pronouncement of most, if not all, Conference members that they wished the substantive work of the Conference to commence as soon as possible. I equally took seriously the necessity to preserve the Conference and its role as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. The other principle I was adamant to follow was full and complete transparency.

I have conducted my consultations in the regional groups. I have used the same talking points, all six of them, in each and every meeting. I have listened very carefully to the positions of the countries and groups of countries that I have consulted with, and let me take this opportunity to thank all member States and observers who have engaged very positively and constructively and in full spirit of flexibility to allow the substantial work to begin.

After those consultations, and based on the talking points, I have drafted and tabled the programme of work outlined in CD/1933. I believe that CD/1933 represents a good compromise between the positions of different individual members and groups in the Conference. It aims to be comprehensive and balanced, but above all, it will allow substantive work to begin without compromising the national interests of member States.

I know that not every delegation will be happy with everything in the document and to wait to achieve that might never allow us to begin substantive work. I was rather aiming at the possible for, after all, politics is the art of the possible. And, I hope that, once studied very diligently, it will not be opposed, that no delegation will oppose this document. Of course, any country may and can oppose it in the end. After all this is their sovereign right, but I think that that would be despite the good and flexible basis of the compromise in CD/1933.

I would like also to remind the Conference that the road ahead is long and hard and, as was once said, now this is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end, but it is perhaps the end of the beginning. Much work lies ahead of us until we reach the ultimate objective of a world free of nuclear weapons, but, we have to take the first step by adopting this proposed programme of work.

I believe that there is a real window of opportunity in the Conference to start substantive work. However, and as was said by many of you, this window is narrowing and I invite the Conference to seize the moment. Ultimately, however, we have to go back to the basics. Where there is a will there is a way. And all I am trying to do today is to open the door for that way.

Finally, I have asked the regional coordinators to share with the groups the need for volunteers to fill the positions of the working group chairs and special coordinators of the agenda items. We will be including such positions in the final draft that we hope to be able to adopt soon.

I now turn to the list of speakers for today and recognize Ambassador Alberto Pedro d'Alotto, Ambassador of Argentina.

Mr. D'Alotto (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would first of all like to thank you for circulating document CD/1933 and for presenting it today. There is no doubt that, eight weeks after the beginning of our work, it was time to consider a programme of work for the Conference.

For my country, given the current circumstances, the document represents a very careful compromise between the different positions of the member States and is proof that, if the political will exists, a combination of simplicity and originality in the drafting of the language can ensure the beginning of substantive work, overcoming more than a decade of deadlock in our Conference.

We hope therefore that, before your presidency ends, we may be able to ensure the document's adoption and swift implementation. You can count on the support of the Argentine delegation.

Mr. President, I am taking the floor in order to inform the rest of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament that, on 1 March 2012, the Mission of Argentina took over the role of members' coordinator for the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) here in Geneva.

OPANAL is the organization responsible for implementing the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the forty-fifth anniversary of which was, as you will recall, celebrated in February 2012.

This instrument created the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone, in which we undertook not to carry out, promote or authorize the testing, use, fabrication, production or possession of nuclear weapons.

These obligations also apply to countries that are not part of the zone and that have acceded to its two Additional Protocols, thereby providing negative security assurances to all the countries of the region. We regret, however, that these assurances continue to be given under certain conditions, while we would hope that the aims and purposes of the Treaty are observed in respect of all those countries that have renounced the military nuclear option.

In June 2011, the Secretary-General of OPANAL participated in the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Gioconda Ubeda, and informed us about the organization's most relevant activities and the prospects for cooperation to strengthen compliance with the objectives laid down in the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The initiative to maintain a liaison in Geneva was decided by the Council of OPANAL in 2010 with the aim of promoting greater interaction between the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, thus contributing to the institutional strengthening of the Agency and enhancing its results at the international level.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the delegations of Mexico and Brazil, the previous coordinators, who established the main characteristics of this important exercise in Geneva.

Lastly, and as decided by the member States, our objective will also be to ensure greater interaction with this forum, keeping the Conference informed of future activities. We invite you to regard this coordination exercise in Geneva as an opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the various existing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

It is inevitable that the 114 States will become a benchmark for the commitment to disarmament made by the vast majority of the international community, and this Conference must not disregard this.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Argentina for his statement and give the floor to the representative of Peru.

Mr. Wieland (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, the delegation of Peru welcomes the presentation of the proposed programme of work for 2012 contained in document CD/1933, which is the result of the efforts and consultations you have undertaken since you took over the presidency of this important body.

Our hope is that this draft will be adopted as swiftly as possible and that the Conference on Disarmament will, without further delay, resume the substantive work for which it was established, since we believe that there is no better way to promote the credibility and legitimacy of this important forum than by starting the substantive work immediately.

It is in the legitimate interest of States to possess weapons in order to safeguard their own security; however, with the development of technology, in particular nuclear technology, the destructive power of weapons has increased to the point where their use could lead to a global disaster.

Thus, at present, the mere existence of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to the very survival of humanity, and as long as nuclear weapons exist, the danger of their proliferation and possible use will also remain.

Accordingly, the sole guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons can only be the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals, and it is for this reason that Peru attaches particular importance to nuclear disarmament and the work of this Conference.

Mr. President, the start of substantive discussions, as proposed in the programme of work that you have presented, does not guarantee that we shall reach a binding agreement on nuclear disarmament, but it does guarantee that we shall have set in motion a process of substantive discussions aimed at nuclear disarmament, in the context of which all States will be able to assert their legitimate security interests.

In reality, the only guarantee that we do have is that we shall never reach an agreement on nuclear disarmament until we begin to approach the topic from a substantive perspective and with a view to initiating the corresponding negotiations. In the present circumstances, it is essential to start the substantive treatment of nuclear disarmament issues as soon as possible.

The Conference on Disarmament was described as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament during the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, and therefore it has a considerable responsibility towards the international community, a responsibility which, as we all know, it has not been able to fulfil thus far.

Today, however, it has an important opportunity to overcome the current deadlock by adopting the programme of work contained in document CD/1933 and by immediately embarking on the corresponding substantive work.

Today, we have the opportunity to really take action, in a responsible and creative way, as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

We have an opportunity. Let us not waste it.

The President: I thank the representative of Peru for his statement and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Switzerland, Ambassador Fasel.

Mr. Fasel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption of this post and on the way in which you are carrying out this important task.

Switzerland fully supports and particularly appreciates the efforts made by the Egyptian presidency to find a new balance in the programme of work.

In our view, document CD/1933 adopts a promising approach. Allow me to assure you, Mr. President, that you have the full support of our delegation. In general, the adoption of a programme of work is the best way to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament and we all have our role to play in overcoming the present situation. We consider that this

approach can help us reach a consensus and allow the Conference on Disarmament to resume substantive work on the agenda items. We would have preferred a stronger negotiating mandate, but we understand that the draft programme of work is the outcome of a long process aimed at building a consensus.

If this compromise can enable us to overcome the current situation and if, with this formula, we are able to achieve significant outcomes, then Switzerland can support this programme of work unreservedly.

As it is the result of a compromise, the programme of work will require some flexibility on the part of all the members of the Conference. We hope that this approach will seem acceptable to all the delegations and that a decision can be taken quickly.

We encourage you to continue with your efforts. This search for consensus prepares the way for the implementation of the programme of work, which will lead to the resumption of the activities of the Conference on Disarmament and a way out of the current deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Switzerland for his intervention and now give the floor to Ambassador Vallim Guerreiro, Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. Vallim Guerreiro (Brazil): Mr. President, a few days ago the Ambassador of Mexico said that you were the person capable of pulling the rabbit out of the hat. You proved to be that person and I compliment you for that and for the efforts you made.

The document we have before us, which you have presented, and on which you are seeking our views is, as you said, the possible document. That's the essence of politics. Now, in politics we should also not allow the best to become the enemy of the good and, as was said here before, let us seize the opportunity we have, *carpe diem*.

Now, if you ask me whether Brazil is happy with the document you produced, I would say, no, we are not happy. We would have very much preferred a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) to be an integral part of nuclear disarmament, both items within the same working group. But we understand that, as some say, this is not realistic. We do not agree that it is not realistic, but we take stock of the position of some countries.

So, let us move forward on the basis of the document which you produced. I hope that a couple of days from now we will be able to make a final decision and start substantive work as you suggested.

So, you have the full support of Brazil in your endeavours.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his intervention and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Germany, Ambassador Hellmut Hoffmann.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): As we are all rather painfully aware, it is not unusual in this Conference to often hear repetitions of well-known points and arguments. Sometimes one even has the rather eerie impression as if one had heard entire statements, and not only once before. Today, I wish to resort to that practice as well, but with a purpose.

Mr. President, at the outset of your taking office, I took the floor on 21 February, and I would like to recall a few points made at that time. I suggested that we must continue our efforts towards a programme of work and that we could not just sit in our seats, like in trenches, and simply repeat old formula which, as we all know, have not proven successful over many years. I argued in favour of encouraging presidents to try out new paths, to find out whether a nuance here or there, which would leave room for constructive ambiguity, might do the trick, so that delegations would not see a need to object to a given proposal.

In this connection, I reminded members of the fact that consensus does not mean that one has to say yes to a proposal, but rather that one does not feel compelled to say no to

a proposal. I would add here that, in practice, there can exist a considerable gap between these two modes of behaviour. In this connection, I pointed out that it is only on the basis of such an understanding that multilateral bodies can be productive at all. If all States insisted on their own preferences and desired outcomes, multilateralism could not exist, let alone thrive, at all. In that sense, all States have a heavy responsibility and duty to make their contribution so that multilateral institutions can actually function.

As far as the substance of the matter is concerned, I pointed out that what appears essential is that the Conference gives itself a clear mandate for substantive work and that can only be, as a minimum, to work on new instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation because that is what its fundamental task is. As stated repeatedly in this chamber, in the view of my delegation, an FMCT should be the next treaty to be negotiated by the Conference. We hope that any adoption of a programme of work would initiate substantive progress on this front.

Mr. President, my delegation very much appreciates the tremendous efforts you have made in the last couple of weeks and days to arrive at a draft programme of work which can actually end 15 years of stalemate and which everybody in this chamber should be able to live with.

From the discussions we've been following, and taking part in, in the last couple of days, we would hope that delegations should indeed be in a position to approach what you have circulated as a draft programme of work in CD/1933 on 8 March in the light of the considerations I recalled just now. We would hope that delegations would indeed be in a position to follow that line which I tried to recall here.

I would add our hope that this would apply to all aspects of the draft programme of work, be it its substantive elements, the nomination of chairs for working groups or coordinators, or the allotment of time for working groups. Let me assure you that my delegation would approach the matter in this way.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his intervention and statement and give the floor to the Ambassador of Ethiopia, Ambassador Getahun.

Mr. Getahun (Ethiopia): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for your relentless efforts in drafting a draft decision on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament for the 2012 session.

For the Conference on Disarmament to remain the sole multilateral negotiating forum, it has to adopt a programme of work and engage in negotiating treaties. We believe that the programme of work you proposed, as contained in document CD/1933, is a good compromise solution to the long-standing deadlock that has blocked the Conference from moving forward in its substantive work.

It is my sincere hope that the decision, which bases itself on the past agreements and some new elements, would be acceptable to all of us.

I appeal to all delegations to show flexibility and look carefully into the document so that we can move the Conference forward in its substantive work. I would particularly like to emphasize that we should not be derailed on technicalities and procedural issues on nominations and timing of the groups.

Again, Mr. President, I thank you for the document and congratulate you on this achievement.

The President: I would like to thank the Ambassador of Ethiopia for his intervention and I give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Romero Puentes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): During the last plenary meetings of this Conference, we heard statements confirming the importance attached by States to the Conference on Disarmament; this has been reflected in the recent discussions on the adoption of a programme of work.

This meeting is marked by the significant and courageous contribution of document CD/1933, achieved by the presidency of Egypt. We wish to announce that we shall be making our substantive comments on the document during the next plenary meeting, but, in principle, we approve this important initiative by the Egyptian presidency, which we believe to be a good basis for our future discussions. In this regard, you can count on the full support of our country to secure the adoption of this document.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for his intervention and give the floor to the Ambassador of Pakistan, Ambassador Zamir Akram.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. President, as this is the first time I am taking the floor during your presidency of the Conference, allow me to acknowledge your hard work and dedication and those of your colleagues towards furthering the work of this august body in a most transparent and consultative manner. Your efforts are reflective of the active and constructive role your country plays on the multilateral stage and in the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation for the imaginative and thoughtful way in which the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga, conducted his presidency.

Mr. President, we take note of the fact that your draft proposal, contained in draft document CD/1933 of 8 March 2012, is based on some of the ideas that you shared with us during the first week of your presidency. However, we also note that some phrases, especially in paragraph 2 of draft document CD/1933, are new additions to your initial ideas, which have a substantive impact on the earlier language. Nevertheless, we have forwarded your proposal to Islamabad for instructions.

At this stage we would like to place on record some preliminary comments regarding both substantive and procedural aspects of your proposal. We look forward to clarifications and comments on these, which would help us to take a decision on your proposal.

Firstly, we are not sure what the proposed mandate “to deal with”, for the working groups on nuclear disarmament and on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, actually means. Does this mandate mean negotiations, pre-negotiations or discussions? In this regard, I would like to draw your attention to rule 23 of the Conference’s rules of procedure, which requires the Conference to define the mandate for any subsidiary body at the time of its establishment. As the word “define”, according to Webster’s dictionary, means “to fix”, “mark the limits of” or “make distinct or clear”, the rules of procedure require that when a subsidiary body is established its mandate should be clearly fixed by the Conference. On the other hand, the mandate “to deal with”, in draft document CD/1933, is vague as it does not clearly define how the respective working groups would deal with the issues assigned to them. The task of defining the mandate can neither be left to the discretion of the envisaged working groups nor be allowed to evolve during the deliberations in the working groups, as the same rule 23 clearly assigns this task to the Conference itself. Therefore, to put the question bluntly – does this mandate on nuclear disarmament and on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons call for negotiations, pre-negotiations, or discussions? Clarity on this issue is crucial for us.

Secondly, draft document CD/1933 proposes a balance between the mandates of the two working groups on nuclear disarmament and on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. However, it is to be noted that the proposed working group on nuclear disarmament only deals with the issue, while the proposed working group on fissile materials for nuclear weapons deals with “elements of a multilateral treaty”. Therefore, the proposed mandates for these two working groups are drastically different in effect. It would be worthwhile to reflect as to how this imbalance in the work of these two groups could be addressed. In our view this should be done by using language that calls for them “to deal with the elements of a convention on nuclear disarmament” as is the case for a “treaty” on fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Also we would like to know why the same mandate “to deal with” cannot be used with the other two working groups, on negative security assurances and on prevention of an arms race in outer space, which are core issues on the Conference’s agenda as well. That would ensure a true balance in our work on all four core issues.

Thirdly, Mr. President, in paragraph 2 of draft document CD/1933, there is a reference to CD/1299, the so-called Shannon mandate, with the addition of the words “while dealing with all related matters”. In this context, we have two queries.

One: does the phrase “while dealing with all related matters” mean that the issue of reduction of stocks is clearly included in the work of the concerned subsidiary body? And two: if the mandate “to deal with” could mean negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, would the phrase “while dealing with all related matters” also mean negotiations on all matters related to reduction of fissile material stocks for nuclear weapons?

Mr. President, Pakistan, in a number of statements in the Conference in the past, has clearly articulated its position on the subject of fissile materials. Without repeating our known position, I wish to reiterate that we cannot accept negotiations on a FMCT that does not clearly include the reduction of stocks of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. We have also earlier pointed out that in view of the existing discriminatory policies of some major Powers in the field of nuclear cooperation, which continues to become worse, the so-called “constructive ambiguity” on the question of stocks, as contained in the Shannon mandate, is no longer adequate to address our security concerns, which have, in fact, increased over the last year.

Mr. President, I keenly look forward to discussions and clarifications on the queries I have raised. These would surely enhance our understanding of the delicate aspects of draft document CD/1933 and would help us in shaping our response to your proposal.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Pakistan for his statement and give the floor to the Ambassador of Ecuador, Ambassador Alfonso Morales.

Mr. Morales (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during your skilful presidency, allow me to congratulate you and the members of your delegation on the transparent, purposeful, proactive and committed manner in which you have conducted the work of this Conference.

Ecuador would once again like to emphasize the importance of this multilateral forum for nuclear disarmament, stability and global peace.

From personal experience, when Ecuador held the presidency, I know that the task of the presidency is not an easy one, because of both the global geopolitical and security situation of some important countries, which at the present time does not make it possible to overcome the deadlock that has paralysed this Conference for over 15 years, and procedural matters that guide negotiations within this body.

It is, to say the least, exhausting and impractical for the President of the Conference on Disarmament to have to negotiate the programme of work on a bilateral or individual basis with 64 members of this body, when it would be more appropriate for terms and documents to be negotiated openly in the plenary meetings with all the members of the Conference. However, the procedural rules and practice so provide. It is now time to reflect on those rules and practice.

Furthermore, we share the sense of frustration expressed by many of the member States who, like Ecuador, would like to see immediate results and some practical progress on the agenda items.

In this connection, my country reaffirms its endorsement of the content and scope of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which is a clear demonstration that when political will exists significant progress can indeed be made in this area.

We should also like to express our appreciation to the presidency of Egypt for circulating document CD/1933, which contains a draft programme of work for the Conference. We believe that the Egyptian proposal is sufficiently balanced, equitable and flexible to accommodate the interests of all the members of the Conference. For this reason, we call on the delegations to adopt, without further delay, the aforementioned document and to put an end to the paralysis that has affected the Conference for more than 15 years.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Ecuador for his statement and give the floor to Ambassador Giovanni Manfredi, Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. Manfredi (Italy): Mr. President, as this is the first time I have the honour to address the Conference under your mandate, I wish to extend to you my congratulations and my very sincere wishes for success.

Mr. President, Italy appreciates very much the hard work and the strong commitment you have put into drafting CD/1933 and shares with you the wish to see the Conference start substantive work again after 15 years; especially we are anxious to see the Conference start substantive work on the fissile material cut-off treaty.

Mr. President, CD/1933 appears to be a promising draft. We know that it is the result of a very difficult compromise that you crafted from a long series of consultations with individual members and with the regional groups. We are now carefully examining CD/1933 in both its positive as well as its negative aspects. Inevitably, Mr. President, a compromise, especially one as difficult as this, never completely satisfies everyone; we are well aware of this.

So I think that by Thursday, we will be able to give you the clarified Italian position on CD/1933.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Italy for his statement and give the floor to the Ambassador of Ireland, Ambassador Gerry Corr.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): Mr. President, as this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, I would like to thank you for the skilful and energetic way in which you have been conducting the difficult task of President.

I would associate my delegation also with the statement delivered on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition by the distinguished Ambassador of South Africa, Ambassador Minty.

I would like to express appreciation for the message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, highlighting the impressive achievements of the Conference in the past, but also expressing his concern that this body was not living up to expectations.

We have also heard in recent weeks from high-level representatives from States who wish to participate as members in this Conference. My delegation fully supports the appointment of a special coordinator to examine the issue of membership.

This year, 2012, is clearly a critical year for the Conference and I want to extend appreciation to Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador for getting us off to a very good start by having our agenda rapidly adopted.

My delegation agrees that the very basis of this body will be increasingly eroded if inertia and paralysis are allowed to continue. Its role as the sole or main multilateral forum for disarmament rests already on a very fragile basis and, unless we can rapidly start a substantive programme of work, that fragility will continue and will be increased.

Mr. President, the draft programme of work you have presented, provides the Conference with an opportunity to get back to work which is the reason this body exists. In an ideal world, the concerns of each member of this body and each member State could be fully, and would be fully, taken into account in the programme of work. But CD/1933 is a compromise and we have to see it on that basis.

Mr. President, for my delegation, CD/1933, the proposal you have put before us, is pragmatic and realistic on the basis that it is a compromise designed to have this body start work once more. You have spoken about delegations needing to move outside their comfort zone. If we bear in mind our shared responsibility and demonstrate flexibility and adopt and implement the draft programme of work you have laid before us, we will be underpinning the foundations of this Conference and sending a signal to the wider international community.

As was said this morning by the Ambassador, the best cannot be enemy of the good. And, while there were many issues that do need to be addressed, and while this draft does not meet the concerns of every delegation, we believe that it is a substantial base on which we could move forward.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes you every success in agreeing and implementing a programme of work and assures you of its support and cooperation in this task.

The President: I thank very much the Ambassador of Ireland for his intervention and give the floor to the Ambassador of Russia, Ambassador Victor Vasiliev.

Mr. Vasiliev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, since this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to welcome you, wish you success and assure you of the support of the Russian delegation in your work.

We recognize the consultation process that you conducted before submitting the draft programme of work and we are considering document CD/1933 as a compromise document put forward at a difficult time for the Conference. We need to take a firm decision to get us out of the current impasse. For that very reason, we are ready to consider this document favourably and to give it our support.

However, I understand that this is not the final version of the document and that certain gaps need to be filled, including with regard to the coordinators of the respective working groups. In this connection, I would like to draw your attention to two, as I see it, technical points. Under the current paragraph numbering used in the document, agenda item 4 on negative security assurances comes under paragraph 3, while agenda item 3 on the prevention of an arms race in outer space comes under paragraph 4. I would like to request that you take this into account and number the paragraphs in accordance with the agenda items. A second point: the week starting 19 June is missing from the schedule you have

provided. So you need to look more carefully at which agenda item will be considered that week. One possibility would be to set aside that week for the consideration of items 5, 6 and 7, and, if there is support, to reflect this in the programme of work.

The President: I thank very much the Ambassador of Russia for his intervention and give the floor to the Ambassador of Chile, Ambassador Oyarce.

Mr. Oyarce (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, my delegation would also like to thank you for your efforts. The initiative that you have presented is a simple text, but one presented at a critical time.

As others have said, the text seeks to achieve a fundamental balance, an approach that we have always believed could move us closer to an agreement. We appreciate the inclusion of different dimensions, I repeat, different dimensions, of nuclear disarmament; this is what is required politically.

Of course, the scope of the mandates and the concepts used are always open to improvement, but let us see what is possible politically.

Mention has been made of constructive ambiguity. One year ago I carried out consultations on the concept of constructive ambiguity and I still think that this concept is a necessary part of the culture of multilateralism when seeking to build a political consensus.

I understand that there might be a need for further details, but there are times when such an approach is needed. The simple formulation needed for a political agreement calls for a certain amount of ambiguity.

We believe that the establishment of a working group and special coordinators for each agenda item is the right step. This is not something new; it has been done before as part of the quest for an agreement; there have been other proposals along similar lines, but what was lacking was the political will to reach an agreement.

This text may provide the opportunity to close a cycle, marked by many contributions and repeated political messages. We hope that with this text we may be able to show that multilateral institutions function and further show the importance of consensus in multilateral practice.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Chile for his intervention and give the floor to the representative of Myanmar, Ambassador Aung.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): Mr. President, first of all, as I am taking the floor under your presidency, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency. Your diplomatic skill has already been proved by providing CD/1933, proposing the programme of work for the Conference at this critical juncture.

As you and other delegations before me have rightly pointed out, or observed, this proposed programme of work will not be satisfactory to all delegations, including mine. What the Myanmar delegation always wanted, as a priority in the Conference, is a committee on nuclear disarmament with a negotiating mandate. This has been our priority all along. However, in practical life, it is not feasible at this moment. So I am sure this proposal will make all delegations equally unhappy, and that includes mine.

That being said, Mr. President, we have given enough thought and consideration to your proposal. We see the merit in your proposal. As you have rightly pointed out, CD/1933 captures basic common denominators which all delegations can work with and, as you put it, begin our substantive work without compromising each and every member's national interest.

Mr. President, we see CD/1933 as a step, perhaps an initial step, in the right direction in our efforts to bring the Conference back to its substantive work. We will broach your proposal on this basis and I believe that my headquarters will be considering it very positively when the time comes to take a decision on it.

The President: I thank the representative of Myanmar, who will very soon be Ambassador, for his intervention and I give the floor to the Ambassador of India, Ambassador Sujata Mehta.

Ms. Mehta (India): Mr. President, this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, so may I begin by congratulating you on your very fine stewardship of the Conference. My delegation appreciates very much your energetic and very transparent efforts.

Indeed, this is the first time that I take the floor during a formal session of the Conference. So, may I take this occasion to say how honoured I am by this opportunity to work within a forum that brings together such a distinguished and fine set of colleagues and express my appreciation for the collaborative and friendly spirit that prevails in this body.

Mr. President, a propos of our agenda today, I would like to thank you for circulating, last week, the draft programme of work contained in CD/1933. We believe that a programme of work is necessary and important for restarting substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. We have conveyed this draft to the capital and it is receiving serious consideration and we hope to be able to respond on that.

At this stage, Mr. President, what we would appreciate very much from you, is your assessment, whether this document is taking us closer to consensus or not and whether it would enable us to begin substantive work in the subsidiary bodies on the basis of a common understanding. Your assessment, Mr. President, would be very helpful in our capital's consideration of this text.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by reiterating that my delegation wishes to see substantive work, including negotiations, commence as soon as possible in the Conference under its rules of procedure.

We thank you once again for your very diligent efforts. The activity you have triggered through discussions on restarting substantive work in the Conference is most admirable.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India for her statement and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Iran, Ambassador Seyed Sajjadi.

Mr. Sajjadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I am pleased to see you chairing the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me to express my appreciation for all of your efforts and for the start of substantive work in the Conference.

Based on the rules of procedure, the adoption of the programme of work is indeed the main task of the Conference in starting its formal negotiation work. My delegation has always insisted on equilibrium and balance among the main core issues as the main criteria for the adoption of the programme of work.

In our view, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work to enable the Conference to start negotiations on the four core issues can best serve the purposes of the Conference as well as the safety and security of the whole international community. The agenda of the Conference is designed in a manner that helps the start of negotiations on jointly reinforcing international instruments for nuclear disarmament. We believe that the early commencement of negotiations within the Conference on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified time frame including a nuclear weapons convention, is the urgent need of the disarmament machinery today. This

convention will prohibit the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to their ultimate destruction.

Mr. President, you talked about the beauty of the phrase “to deal with”, in giving flexibility to all States to start negotiations in the Conference. Can we use this verb and start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention in the first working group on nuclear disarmament? Or is nuclear disarmament exempted from this beauty? Do we not need more clarity in the mandate of the first working group based on rule 23 of the rules of procedure? Second, on the fissile material treaty (FMT), you said many times with no ambiguity, that the issue of stocks should be covered under a possible treaty. The FMT should be a clear and meaningful step towards nuclear disarmament. And non-proliferation in all its aspects, past production and existing stocks, as well as the future production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, must be covered under the scope of the treaty. Any negotiation on the FMCT which does not include stocks would have no content and consequently would be fruitless. We have to be clear in our programme of work on these important subjects. Mr. President, do you think the phrase “dealing with all relevant matters” would provide enough guarantee that the issue of stocks would be covered under the negotiated treaty?

Finally, Mr. President, your proposal on the programme of work, as contained in CD/1933, which we received last Friday, was immediately transmitted to our capital. It is under due consideration by our capital and I hope that we will receive soon the views of our capital on this proposal. The result of this meeting and the responses to the questions raised in the meeting would help us better understand your proposal and subsequently contribute to the positive consideration of this proposal in the capital.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Iran for his intervention and give the floor to the Ambassador of New Zealand, Ambassador Dell Higgie.

Ms. Higgie (New Zealand): Mr. President, as this is the first time that New Zealand is speaking under your presidency, I would like to congratulate Egypt, my fellow New Agenda Coalition member, on your assumption of this important position. We appreciate the intensive efforts exerted by Egypt — all your delegation here — that have led to the circulation of CD/1933 and we are grateful for the leadership by Egypt in seeking, as the Ambassador of Brazil said this morning, to pull a rabbit out of the hat and to realize our collective ambition of getting down to substantive work here in the Conference.

We think that CD/1933, as a compromise, does offer an excellent basis to go forward. We note that the mandate put forward in paragraph 1, on nuclear disarmament, reflects the language of action 6 of the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and accordingly, as a delegation that places considerable importance on that action plan and, as I have already noted, a member of the New Agenda Coalition and strongly committed to nuclear disarmament, we support this language. It seems to us to have adequate clarity and to offer a way forward on this very important topic.

We appreciate that the formulation in paragraph 2 is a realistic attempt to take the issue of fissile materials forward. New Zealand has long sought progress on this issue and we can see the value in the mandate you have proposed. You yourself, Mr. President, quoted Churchill this morning and we would hope that your almost Churchillian efforts to secure consensus will indeed be successful and that we can, in short order, adopt a programme of work.

The President: I thank you very much Ambassador of New Zealand for your comments and I give the floor to the Ambassador of China, Ambassador Wu Haitao.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, as this is the first time the Chinese delegation has taken the floor in plenary meeting during your presidency, we would like to congratulate you on assuming the rotating presidency of the Conference. China has consistently held the view that the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is the sole and most appropriate forum for the negotiation of arms control and disarmament treaties. We support the early adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work for the Conference and the start of substantive work as soon as possible. China supports any suggestions or efforts that will help us to achieve this objective.

Mr. President, we thank you for describing the considerations you took into account when proposing the draft programme of work and your vision for the next phase of our work. We wish to express our appreciation to you personally and the delegation of Egypt for your tireless efforts to push forward the work of the Conference and for your open, transparent and pragmatic working methods. The Chinese delegation is carefully studying the document submitted by the President under symbol CD/1933, and we hope the President will continue to communicate with all parties, listen to their opinions, strive to reach agreement as soon as possible on a programme of work and promote the early start of substantive work in the Conference. As always, my delegation will cooperate with the President in his work and make collaborative efforts to advance the work of the Conference.

The President: I thank very much the Ambassador of China for his statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? If not, I am considering perhaps giving you a few comments for clarity.

First, I appreciate very much the reaction and the support for the Egyptian presidency and for chairing the work of the Conference. Second, I also appreciate very much the support for proposal CD/1933, as presented as a compromise. I have noted that there is perhaps an emerging agreement from the statements concerning this proposal. I know also that there is a question concerning clarity from some delegations and, although some have said that it is clear, I will attempt — in order for these delegations to go back to headquarters, and so that we can perhaps present this on Thursday for adoption — to provide some extra clarity while at the same time keeping the flexibility which is inherent in this programme of work.

As regards the rules of procedure, I understand that we have to clarify the mandate of the working group. The mandate of the working group is clear; it is to deal with the subject matter. That is the mandate. The mandate is to deal with the subject matter. I would not like to be pushed further, what does “to deal with” mean? But if pushed further, and for the sake of extra clarity, and for the sake of capitals, I would say that “to deal with” means that the mandate is for the working group to work substantively on the issue and advance the substantive work in accordance with the agreement in the working group and in accordance with the rules of procedure. So if someone is asking what “to deal with” is, I would say it is to deal with the subject matter. If pushed further, if you need more clarity, on what exactly “deal with” means, I will tell you, and I will read it again: the mandate of the working group is to work substantively on the issue and advance the substantive work in accordance with the agreement in the working group and in accordance with the rules of procedure. Obviously, “deal with” would have the same meaning wherever it applies in the text.

Regarding the issue of scope, the language in CD/1933 makes clear that the scope is indeed a part of any possible work on such a treaty, which must be also entertained and discussed. As regards some technical amendments, hopefully the order of paragraphs 3 and 4 will be taken into consideration in the final draft that will be presented on Thursday, inshallah.

As regards the chairpersons of the working group, I will be waiting to consult on the matter. I know this is an important element of this process, and I hope that we can also preserve the balance that we hope for in this regard.

I see no more requests for the floor. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 15 March 2012 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.